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## Insights into Reaction Mechanism of $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$ in Foaming Process of Cullet Powder

- Awarded as the Best Poster (1st Prize)

Petersen, Rasmus Rosenlund; König, Jakob; Smedskjær, Morten Mattrup; Yue, Yuanzheng

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## Insights into reaction mechanism of $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$ in foaming process of cullet powder

**Rasmus R. Petersen<sup>1</sup>, Jakob König<sup>1,2</sup>, Morten M. Smedskjaer<sup>1</sup>, Yuanzheng Yue<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Section of Chemistry, Aalborg University, DK-9000 Aalborg, Denmark

<sup>2</sup> Advanced Materials Department, Jožef Stefan Institute, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

Soda ( $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$ ) is one of the major raw materials for producing most of the daily used glasses. It often acts as effective fluxing agent in glass melting and foaming agent for producing lightweight glass materials due to its release of  $\text{CO}_2$  at elevated temperatures. When  $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$  is added to a batch prior to glass melting, the resulting decomposition product  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  has strong impact on the melt viscosity, phase separation and crystallisation behaviour, and also mechanical properties of the final glass. This is relatively well understood in literature. In contrast, when  $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$  is added as a foaming agent together with glass cullet powder, the impact of the resulting  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  on the glass structure at the foaming temperatures has not been well understood. Here, we show that  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  can be readily incorporated into the network structure of the glass phase at temperatures much lower than normal batch melting temperatures. This is verified by a sharp decrease of the glass transition temperature ( $T_g$ ) of the resulting foam glass when the foaming temperature is increased from 650 to 800 °C for various contents of  $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$  (up to 22 wt%). Upon further raising the foaming temperature,  $T_g$  reaches a plateau for lower  $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$  content, whereas it slightly increases again for the higher  $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$  due to possible crystallization. The sharp decrease in  $T_g$  implies that  $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$  reacts readily with the cullet powder at rather low temperatures. The released  $\text{CO}_2$  at an optimum temperature causes ideal foaming effect in the glass, making the studied cullet powder potentially suitable for producing insulation materials. Finally, we discuss these results based on supplementary x-ray diffraction and scanning electron microscopy analyses.